



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS

P.O. Box 1450

Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/663,487	09/16/2003	Joseph P. Errico	F-293	2429
530 7590 01/22/2009 LERNER, DAVID, LITTENBERG, KRUMHOLZ & MENTLIK 600 SOUTH AVENUE WEST WESTFIELD, NJ 07090				
EXAMINER PELLEGRINO, BRIAN E				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3738				
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
01/22/2009		PAPER		

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

### Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

10/663,487

**Applicant(s)**

ERRICO ET AL.

**Examiner**

Brian E. Pellegrino

**Art Unit**

3738

**-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --**  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 November 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 9, 10, 12-15, 19 and 21-28 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 2, 19 and 21-28 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 3-7, 9, 10 and 12-15 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 11/3/08
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## DETAILED ACTION

### ***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 11/3/08 has been entered.

### ***Priority***

Applicant's claim for the benefit of a prior-filed application under 35 U.S.C. 120 is acknowledged. Applicant has not complied with one or more conditions for receiving the benefit of an earlier filing date under 35 U.S.C. 120 as follows: no petition was filed with the late claim for priority.

If applicant desires to claim the benefit of a prior-filed application under 35 U.S.C. 120, a specific reference to the prior-filed application in compliance with 37 CFR 1.78(a) must be included in the *first sentence(s) of the specification* following the title or in an application data sheet during the proper time frame. For benefit claims under 35 U.S.C. 120, the reference must include the proper relationship (i.e., continuation, divisional, or continuation-in-part) of the applications desired to claim priority during the permitted time frame for submitting the claim to priority. Additionally, the reference to add the

above, noted, prior-filed applications in the first sentence of the specification on page one following the title is not acceptable as drafted since it has improperly incorporated by reference the prior-filed applications. An incorporation by reference statement added after an application's filing date is not effective because no new matter can be added to an application after its filing date (see 35 U.S.C. § 132(a)). If an incorporation by reference statement is included in an amendment to the specification to add a benefit claim under 35 U.S.C. § 120 after the filing date of the application, the amendment would not be proper. When a benefit claim under 35 U.S.C. § 120 is submitted after the filing of an application, the reference to the prior application cannot include an incorporation by reference statement of the prior application. See *Dart Industries v. Banner*, 636 F.2d 684, 207 USPQ 273 (C.A.D.C. 1980). Note MPEP §§ 201.06(c) and 608.04(b).

Thus, since the instant application is a utility application filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) after November 29, 2000, the specific reference must be submitted during the pendency of the application and *within the later of four months from the actual filing date of the application or sixteen months from the filing date of the prior application*. This time period is not extendable and a failure to submit the reference required by 35 U.S.C. 119(e) and/or 120, where applicable, within this time period is considered a waiver of any benefit of such prior application(s) under 35 U.S.C. 119(e), 120, 121 and 365(c). A *benefit claim filed after the required time period may be accepted if it is accompanied by a grantable petition to accept an unintentionally delayed benefit claim under 35 U.S.C. 119(e), 120, 121 and 365(c)*. The petition must be accompanied by (1) the reference

required by 35 U.S.C. 120 or 119(e) and 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2) or (a)(5) to the prior application (unless previously submitted), (2) a surcharge under 37 CFR 1.17(t), and (3) a statement that the entire delay between the date the claim was due under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2) or (a)(5) and the date the claim was filed was unintentional. The Director may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional. The petition should be addressed to: Mail Stop Petition, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 19,25-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim 19 recites "at least three separate surgical approach aspects" in lines 17,18 of which is vague and undefined. It is not clear how this imparts any structure since the term "approach" imparts a functional limitation without any feature to define what is meant by the limitation.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1,2,19,21-23,25-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Jackson (6821298). Fig. 1 shows baseplates **21,22** mounted to one another via hinge **32**. The examiner is interpreting the claimed elements "baseplates" in this way: relatively thin supportive structure for the vertebrae. Claims in a pending application should be given their broadest reasonable interpretation. *In re Pearson*, 181 USPQ 641 (CCPA 1974). See also *In re Morris*, Fed. Cir. 1997 127 F3d 1048, 1054,1055. Since the upper and lower members can move relative to one another they can be said to "articulate" as the term is not being given any special definition. It is just being interpreted as a joint. Clearly a hinged object works as a joint, See Figs. 3,4 that illustrate movement of the baseplates relative due to the hinged end allowing the articulation to go to a lordotic angle when engaged with the tool. Additionally, the Examiner is not giving any special definition to "manipulation tool" and is interpreting as such: an object used to cause or manipulate other elements to mechanically move. Therefore, the Examiner considers the "tool" to be element **12** in combination with manipulation elements **13,14**. As seen in Figs. 1,3 the tool 12 clearly has a central wedge portion between top and bottom angled surfaces that engage the first and second baseplates having corresponding angled perimeters. Please note that the limitation of "surgical approach aspects" is not being given much patentable weight since no definitive structural limitations are imparted by the terms and are intended use.

Regarding claim 22,23 Fig. 10 shows how the top angled surface includes the central flat surface flanked by two flat surfaces to form the wedge between the angled upper and lower surfaces and the central flat surface is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the manipulation element **63**.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims 24,28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jackson '298. Jackson is explained supra. However, Jackson fails to disclose the plane of the central flat surfaces between the top and bottom angled surfaces to be angled with respect to one another. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the central flat surfaces of the wedge section to be angled with respect to one another in the tool of Jackson such that it provides a greater amount of leverage when engaging the angled surfaces of the upper and lower angled surfaces of the implant. The motivation to combine is that the mechanical technologies only involve routine skill in the art.

### ***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 3-7,9,10,12-15 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1,19 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Brian E. Pellegrino whose telephone number is 571-272-4756. The examiner can normally be reached on M- F (7am-5:30pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Corrine McDermott can be reached on 571-272-4754. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

TC 3700  
/Brian E Pellegrino/  
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3738